

Message Text

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PAGE 01 FREETO 00648 181728Z

ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4886

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE FREETOWN 0648

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: SHUM SL

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS IN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE RECIPIENT COUNTRIES

REF: (A) STATE 14518; (B) STATE 35482

1. COMMENTS AS REQUESTED REFTEL (A):

A. SIERRA LEONE IS A DE FACTO ONE PARTY, PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC. ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIMENT ARE MEMBERS OF ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC), THE ONLY VIABLE POLITICAL PARTY. MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTY, THE SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY (SLPP) WHILE NOT OUTLAWED, IS NOT ABLE TO FUNCTION AS EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION. GENERAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 1977 AND ROLE FOR OPPOSITION NOT YET PRECLUDED. THE PRESS IS CONTROLLED BY THE APC AND THE GOVERNMENT; THE SLPP AND OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS LACK EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO THE MEDIA. THE PRESIDENT DOMINATES THE POLITICAL ARENA AND HAS FINAL SAY ON NEARLY ANY DECISION. GENERALLY, LOW LEVEL OPPOSITION TO THE APC IS TOLERATED, BUT OVERT OPPOSITION TO THE PRESIDENT IS NOT TOLERATED.

B. LEGAL SITUATION: A STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS DECLARED FEBRUARY 1, 1977, IN THE WADE OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND COUNTER
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DEMONSTRATIONS BY APC SUPPORTERS. DURING 1976 THERE WAS NO STATE OF EMERGENCY, AND IT IS GENERALLY FELT THE PRESENT STATE OF EMERGENCY WILL BE OF TEMPORARY DURATION. THE JUDICIARY REMAINS RELATIVELY INDEPENDENT AND TRIALS AND INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING CHARGES AGAINST SEVERAL CIVIL SERVANTS ARE IN PROGRESS. ACCORDING TO BEST AVAILABLE SOURCES, THEE ARE NO PRISONERS, NOW BEING HELD, WHO ARE CONSIDERED POLITICAL.

C. THE OFFICIAL GOSL ATTITUDE TOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IS COMPLIANCE AND AGREEMENT WITH INTERNATIONALLY AGREED PRINCIPLES. ACTUAL OBSERVANCE OF INTEGRITY OF PERSON (PARA 2C REFTTEL A) COMPARES FAVORABLY WITH OTHER DEVELOPING AFRICAN COUNTRIES. A FAIR TRIAL IS AVAILABLE TO THE ACCUSED; TREATMENT OF INDIVIDUALS, THOUGH HARSH BY U.S. STANDARDS, IS NOT ARBITRARY AND CONFORMS TO LOCAL STANDARDS. ACTUAL OBSERVANCE OF FREEDOMS SUCH AS FREEDOM OF RELIGION, ASSEMBLY, MOVEMENT AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP ALSO COMPARES VERY FAVORABLY WITH OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WITH VERY FEW LIMITATIONS IMPOSED.

D. NO REPORTS BY NON-GOVERNMENT OR MULTILATERAL AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AVAILABLE AT POST.
SAMUELS

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Message Attributes

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